Detailed Study Information

August 30, 2007

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Chula Vista is conducting a planning study for a 2,000-acre section of the master planned Otay Ranch community. The study will provide the conceptual alignment and station locations for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network and supporting transit services to link Otay Ranch's town centers, the planned university campus, a regional technology park, and Village 9 with each other and activity centers in Downtown San Diego, southern San Diego County, and the region.

SANDAG has been planning for the development of the Otay BRT service between Otay Ranch and Downtown San Diego along I-805. The Chula Vista Transit Study will allow for a comprehensive development of the community's vision for transit service in the area, as well as the up-front application of lessons learned regarding development of stations, transitways, and priority measures. While preliminary station placement and alignment decisions are underway for the Easter Urban Center, most of the decisions regarding the details of BRT service to the university, Village 9, and surrounding areas remain to be made. Most of the transit service decisions to date stem from transit service refinement or long-range transit planning efforts, but they have not yet focused on the specific needs of the community. This study as a unique opportunity to fill in the gaps and complete a comprehensive transit service vision for the area.

Otay Ranch has many attributes that make it unique and a prime candidate for a study like this:

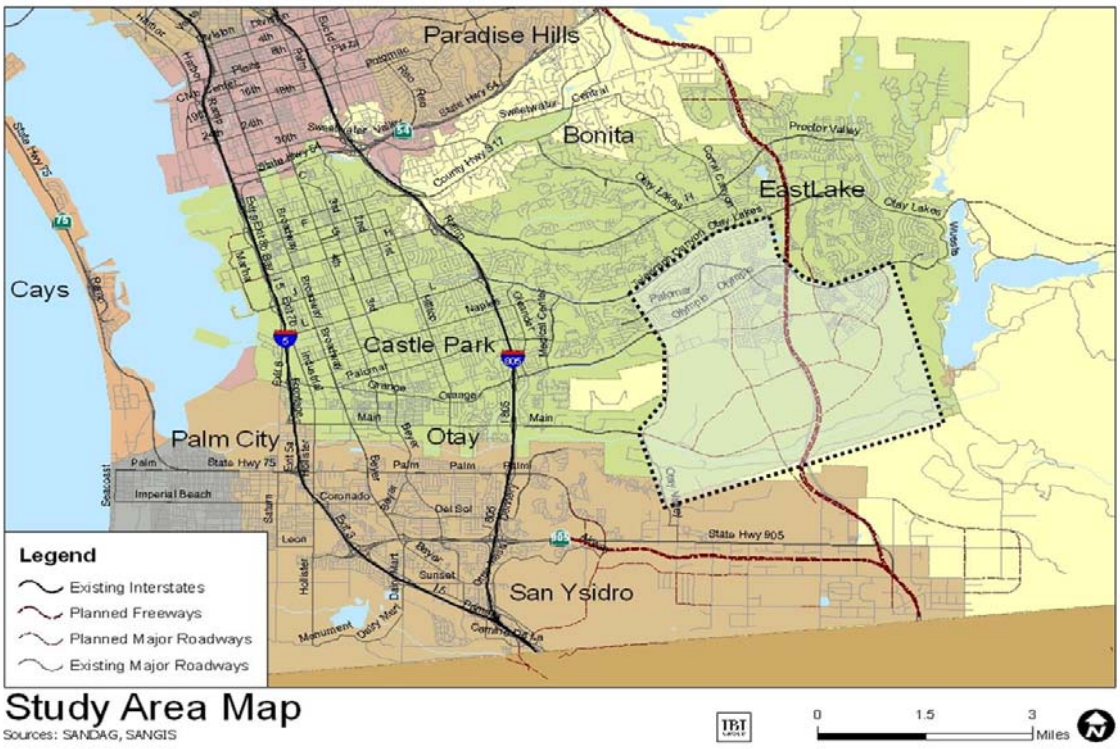
- A vibrant community in its own right, and is becoming much more than a bedroom community for other areas in the region.
- A community which encompasses major transit oriented opportunities that do not exist in most other areas of the County.
- Growing rapidly and a comprehensive plan for high quality and effective transit service needs to get in front of this growth to properly express the desires of the community.

The study will provide a sound foundation for realizing the city's, as well as the community's, vision for transit service in the study area by providing:

- Concept Drawings for Stations and Supporting Uses – Visual representations of stops, stations, and transit service concepts are essential to getting useful community input and eventual buy-in. A series of options will be developed that allow for differing viewpoints to converge as the project progresses, and flexibility to be maintained to support changes likely to occur prior to actual implementation.
- A Common Understanding of Transit Service and Approach to Priority Measures – Various stakeholders have differing views and understanding of how transit service and transit priority works, and a common vision will developed that allows for consensus on service, stations, and priority measures.
- Stakeholder Consensus on a Clear Program for Implementation – Concept drawings and sound engineering will help the city develop a clear consensus around a viable series of actions defined in a comprehensive implementation plan.

STUDY AREA

The overall study area is shown in the figure below. The primary focus of the study is the Village 9 and University area. However, transit options will be considered in the broader context of connectivity with the rest of Chula Vista and the region. As a result, transit options that serve both local and regional needs will be considered in the study.



Study Area Map

Sources: SANDAG, SANGIS

TRANSIT SERVICES BEING CONSIDERED

Four basic types of services are being considered for application in the Otay Ranch area:

- Bus Rapid Transit
- Rapid Bus
- Circulator
- Local Bus

The basic characteristics of each of these service types are discussed below in greater detail. The service types will be reviewed individually and in combination to assess what overall transit service options exist for the Otay Ranch region. Each service option will be considered in light of currently planned regional transit services that would provide connectivity in and out of the Otay Ranch area.

BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is the highest level of transit service which is being considered for the Otay Ranch area. It is intended to approximate the passenger capacity and amenities of the San Diego Trolley (considered Light Rail Transit) without the need for fixed trackway and specialized structures and systems. It offers significantly improved service over typical local bus options by providing enhanced stations, faster travel times, and improved vehicles. BRT in the Otay Ranch area will combine a series of transit only lanes with mixed flow (BRT vehicles in normal auto traffic) to provide the best balance of flexibility and improved transit service options. The Otay BRT line is already in preliminary engineering and will provide service between Downtown San Diego and eastern Chula Vista. Along the way it will utilize special transit lanes and freeway access on Palomar Street and cross over SR125 and run just to the west along Eastlake Blvd.

Example of Operational BRT Lanes and Stations Vancouver, BC above and Las Vegas, NV below

As with the already planned Otay BRT line, BRT service can provide viable commute options and connect with key destinations throughout the San Diego region. BRT can also provide peak capacity to support special events and high demand occurrences such as may be generated by the Coors Amphitheater, university events, and/or potential future football stadium. Additional BRT service options will be considered in terms of how they may best connect eastern Chula Vista with the Otay Ranch BRT line, as well as major internal and external destinations.

BRT Tends to Use Larger Well-Appointed Transit Vehicles Similar to the LA MetroRapid Example

Preliminary Concept for BRT Service in Mid-Cities Area with Dedicated Transit Lane

BRT service is also being planned for near-term implementation in the Mid-Cities area of San Diego between SDSU and Downtown San Diego.

RAPID BUS SERVICE

Rapid Bus service is a concept that has been developed in the San Diego region to provide a service level option between BRT and traditional local bus service. Unlike BRT service, Rapid Bus is less comparable to the San Diego Trolley and more a version of significantly enhanced local bus service. Rapid Bus service includes localized roadway treatments to reduce delay and speed service, but does not have the more fully dedicated transitway of BRT. Stops are improved over typical bus stops with special branding, real-time traveler information, and improved seating/waiting areas. Transit vehicles are generally standard 40' low floor buses, but would generally be newer and have special markings.

Rapid Bus still makes use of special treatments to enhance transit travel times and reduce traffic delay (similar to the queue jump lane shown above along Friars Road). Rapid Bus also offers special branding and improved stops as shown below in the preliminary concept for the BreezeRapid service planned for Escondido.

Overall, Rapid Bus service still provides a significant enhancement over traditional local bus service and has the added advantages of greater service flexibility and lower costs. Rapid Bus service is well suited to corridors that may have continuous transit demand with moderately high peak travel demands. Extra service can be added for special events and high demand periods, but Rapid Bus cannot generally match BRT passenger capacities.

Rapid Bus service is being planned in North County San Diego along existing Route 350 to improve connections between the Escondido Transit Center and Westfield's Shoppingtowne North County. Stops will be improved and highlight the Rapid Bus service which will be called "BreezeRapid." Localized priority treatments and signal priority will be provided along the corridor to help reduce travel times for the BreezeRapid.

Rapid Bus service may offer significant potential for the Otay Ranch area by providing a balance between local connectivity and transit amenities and speed. In particular, Rapid Bus service may provide for excellent connections with planned BRT service in the area and could make use of both normal roadways and specialized transit accessways or mixed pedestrian, transit, and bicycle corridors.

CIRCULATOR SERVICE

Circulator service is similar to Rapid Bus, but it focuses more on providing high frequency service connecting key local activity centers. Stops tend to have fewer amenities (excepting major transfer locations) as higher service frequencies mean that customers have shorter potential waits before the next bus arrives. Circulator services use smaller buses or specialized transit vehicles, typically around 30' in length which allows the circulator vehicles to penetrate into residential communities or tighter roadway networks not suited to larger transit buses. Circulator service is focused on providing a solid local transit option for residents, commuters, and retail customers, and should not be confused with jitney services which are more focused on visitor or tourist transportation. Circulator services do make use of localized roadway treatments and signal priority (similar to Rapid Bus) to reduce delays and increase transit speeds.

The SuperLoop service proposed in the University City area and currently in early engineering phases will provide a high frequency circulator service that connects: University of California San Diego, Scripps Hospital Complex, University Towne Centre, La Jolla Village Square, and surrounding high density residential communities. SuperLoop will provide enhanced station amenities with a specialized set of smaller branded transit vehicles along with various physical and signal based priority treatments to reduce the impacts of traffic congestion on transit travel times. SuperLoop will connect with regional routes and services at key transfer points.

Circulator service typically uses smaller vehicles with special characteristics (top) and can still include specialized branding and stop amenities as shown in the preliminary stop concept for SuperLoop in University City above.

Overall circulator services may be well suited to connecting key activity centers in the Otay Ranch area and providing connections to regional services for commute and regional trips. Circulators are not well suited to supporting regional trips in of themselves, and are not particular useful to support peak demands associated with large special events. Circulators might be particularly well suited to connecting the planned Otay BRT line and the university complex.

LOCAL BUS

Local bus service is the traditional transit service already provided throughout much of San Diego County. Local bus service is characterized by close stop spacing and stops are generally simple without any special designations or branding. Vehicles are traditional 40' low floor buses that can be interchanged with other local bus routes throughout the broader service area. Local bus service can be useful in supporting connections to regional and other services.

Local bus service provides for close stop spacing and good walk accessibility to stops, but sacrifices speed.

There are a few of existing local bus routes in the Otay Ranch area including Routes 707, 709, 709A, and 712, however these routes do not currently provide service into the southern or eastern portions of Otay Ranch.

Overall, local bus service is not effective for longer trips, commutes, and/or special events needs. Restructuring or addition of local bus service may work to provide connectivity with other services in the Otay Ranch area, but local service is generally not highly effective at attracting "choice" riders away from the auto option.

STUDY PRODUCTS

The study will provide a series of reports and exhibits to establish alignments, station locations, and service types to help guide the development of the Village 9 and University communities, including

Station Analysis

- Transit station site concepts for University Village and Village 9.
- Transit stations for various services and alignments.
- Location of stations to speed service and/or provide better access to transit centers.

Traffic Analysis

- Types and locations of priority treatments.
- Analysis of how they will function and their impact on traffic.
- Connectivity between the university campus and Village 9 under various alternatives.
- Analysis of how the elimination or reduction of Eastlake Parkway would affect parallel facilities and Village 9 couplets.

Analysis of Supporting Facilities

- Identify locations for elements such as park and ride lots, drop off areas, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian facilities.
- Describe supporting land uses and relation to proposed support facilities.

Conceptual Engineering Sketches

- Concept sketches of intersections and segments of the transitway.
- Right of way requirements for stations and priority treatments, station access (pedestrian and vehicular), land use integration, and park and ride capability.
- Concept sketches for key stations.

Capital Cost Estimates

- Order of magnitude cost estimates for the recommended improvements, i.e., stops, priority treatments, supporting systems, right of way, communications, etc.

Phasing and Implementation Plan

- Phasing plan, including dependant and independent actions.
- Complete system development over five years.
- Relation to planned development of communities and subareas, street and highway system, transit system, increases in service.
- Phasing of capital costs.

Final Report

- Compilation of study results into a final report in both hard copy and pdf.

SCHEDULE

The study is currently underway and will be completed by the end of June 2008. It will progress through the completion of key milestones as listed below.

Service Alternatives	August 2007
Station Analysis and Supporting Facilities	August 2007
Traffic Analysis	September 2007
Public Meeting	October 2007
Engineering Analysis and Cost Estimates	October 2007
Phasing and Implementation Plan	November 2007
Public Meeting	November 2007
Final Report	December 2007

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED

There will be several opportunities to get involved with the planning process.

- Study Website – This website will be updated regularly as the study progresses to provide more information on the alternatives, the analysis, and next steps.

- Contact Us – Use the email link below to send us your thoughts and comments. All comments received will be considered in developing and analyzing the transit proposals.

- Attend Presentations – Presentations will be made at key points in the study to the Planning Commission, Technical Advisory Committee, and other groups. Public meetings in September and November are also planned. Check the website for times and places.

- Get on Our Email List – Everyone who emails us about the study will be included in our group email list. Periodic project updates will be sent to keep you informed of the study's progress, ibisd@ibigroup.com